



NEWS RELEASE

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USDA ANNOUNCES \$24.8 MILLION TO ASSIST RURAL COMMUNITIES *Nearly \$10 Million to Support First Responder Efforts in 23 States and Territories*

WASHINGTON, Aug. 24, 2004—Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman today announced that 312 community facility funding requests from 33 states and U.S. Territories have been selected to receive \$24.8 million in grant funds to assist with community development projects.

“The Bush Administration is committed to improving the quality of life for America’s rural citizens by enhancing local community facilities and services,” Veneman said. “These funds include nearly \$10 million to support rural emergency responder efforts as part of the Administration’s First Responder Initiative.”

The funds announced today are a major investment in the lives and security of rural citizens and are part of the Bush Administration’s ongoing support of rural communities and their ability to promote economic development, gain access to better community services and enhanced preparations for emergency situations.

USDA Rural Development provides financing of a variety of community facilities, such as: libraries, courthouses, fire and rescue facilities and equipment, police and emergency vehicles and services and other community focused facilities and services. Veneman said that the Bush Administration has invested over \$1.5 billion to address essential community needs that assist with public safety, education, health care, cultural, transportation, and other public needs. As part of this overall investment, funding has been provided to purchase nearly 600 fire trucks and 150 police cars, and construct or renovate nearly 100 medical facilities, 71 public or charter schools and 155 child care centers. In addition, \$29 million in grant funds have been invested in 93 telemedicine grant projects to develop technologies needed to enhance medical care involving 846 health care institutions.

In North Dakota, two recipients received a combined total of \$930,000.

Sitting Bull College of Fort Yates received an Economic Impact Grant for \$200,000 and a Tribal College Initiative Grant for \$200,000. The funds will be used toward the construction of a new science building. In addition, Sitting Bull College received a Tribal College Initiative grant for \$500,000 to be used for the Business Information Center.

The Greater Carson Rural Fire Protection District of Carson received a Community Facility Grant for \$14,000 and a Direct Loan for \$16,000. The funds will be used toward the purchase of a fire truck.

“These grants represent President George Bush’s commitment to rural areas,” said North Dakota USDA Rural Development State Director, Clare Carlson.

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. As a venture capital entity, Rural Development provides equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.

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